

Children's Services

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES PRIORITY ONE: Restore resources for aftercare [parole] to the Department of Juvenile Justice. It is currently a "shared service," with the Department of Corrections.

What is aftercare [parole]? It is a period of community supervision required by law for all youth released from the DJJ.

Legal process. Most youth are committed to the DJJ by the Juvenile Court Act; the Director of DJJ is appointed legal custodian. Prior to release, the DJJ must prepare for the Prisoner Review Board a case plan that includes community placement requirements, intensity of supervision and an assessment of treatment needs. The Board determines the release date for most youth and sets rules to be followed. Failure to comply may result in additional confinement.

What is happening. After release, DJJ youth are now assigned to DOC parole staff who also supervise adults, sometimes with caseloads as high as 150. Until a few years ago the juvenile system had its own aftercare: staff monitored the progress of institutionalized youth, mobilized needed resources and worked with the youth and their families after release.

What the DJJ is attempting to do. The DJJ is in the process of restoring aftercare. It has analyzed its population and adopted a risk instrument that will provide for uniform case planning from commitment to discharge. DJJ is piloting a treatment model at IYC-Chicago and creating an aftercare unit in Cook County. Eventually, DJJ wants to meet national juvenile caseload standards and organize services by region in order to facilitate links to community services, including schools.

What are supervision and service needs of DJJ youth? *Supervision.* Three quarters are aging out or are already young adults; almost two-thirds have committed serious felonies and half are chronic offenders. *Services.* Two-thirds have diagnosed mental health conditions; seven out of ten a clinical diagnosis of drug dependency; two-thirds have not graduated from grade school; almost half have special education needs; and one quarter will need alternative community placement. *Compared to other states?* Illinois has a lower rate of commitments. Its youth are relatively higher risk with a higher proportion of older youth, sex offenders and parole violators.

Funding. The DJJ came into existence in 2006 without its own aftercare. There have been NO appropriations for aftercare since that time. The department's treatment and aftercare models have been developed solely through public and private grants.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PRIORITY TWO: Improve mental health services for juvenile justice youth. The MacArthur Foundation Models for Change has assembled a team of national and state experts to assess the capacity of DJJ to serve the behavioral health needs and make recommendations.

For more information

- See www.lwvil.org/children.asp
- Consider signing up to serve as a Grass Roots Advocate.
- Questions? Suggestions? Please email Eileen Subak issues@lwvil.org